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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000122

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV NATO LO

SUBJECT: GUIDANCE REQUEST: PURSUING REPORTS ON NATIONAL SECURITY OFFICE CHIEF'S COMMUNIST-ERA PAST

REF: BRATISLAVA 49

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Keith A. Eddins for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Local media have uncovered information in archived intelligence files implicating Frantisek Blanarik, the head of Slovakia's National Security Office (NBU), as someone who knowingly cooperated with Communist-era intelligence services. If the information in the archived files is accurate, Blanarik would be ineligible for his job according to Slovak law. Thus far Parliament has said that it cannot confirm or deny the allegations, and the PM said he has "serious suspicions" that the documents may have been manipulated. Post does not share the PM's suspicions and believes that a fuller investigation of the facts of the matter is called for to demonstrate that Slovakia -- a NATO ally -- takes the protection of classified information and the rule of law seriously. We request USNATO comments on the broader resonance of this issue within the Alliance, and Department concurrence with talking points proposed in paragraph 6, to be used in urging the GoS to undertake a full and thorough investigation. End summary.

¶2. (U) Slovakia's NBU is charged with granting security clearances to government officials who come into contact with information classified by Slovakia, NATO or the EU. The NBU Director is required to hold the highest level clearance. According to the law on the protection of classified information, a person is considered ineligible for such a clearance if he or she "consciously cooperated" with the Secret Police (STB) or an intelligence service of the Czechoslovak People's Army. In the past year, news organizations have uncovered at least six references to Blanarik in archived intelligence files in Prague and Bratislava that cumulatively create a reasonable suspicion Blanarik actively and knowingly reported on colleagues and acquaintances to Communist-era intelligence organizations in the 1980s.

¶3. (SBU) A parliamentary committee overseeing the NBU met February 13 to discuss the allegations against Blanarik and an opposition proposal that he submit to a new security screening. The Committee concluded, however, that the documents on which the allegations are based contain mistakes and contradictory information, and decided to do nothing. The committee's chairman, Anton Korba of the Slovak National Party -- a member of the governing coalition -- refused to entertain an opposition proposal that Blanarik's clearance be reviewed. (Comment: Given the coalition's significant majority in Parliament, and the not uncommon participation of former Communists in the government and ruling parties, the committee's decision should not be read as an exonerations of Blanarik's past. Korba himself was an officer in the Czechoslovak People's Army from 1978 to 1988. End comment.)

¶4. (SBU) To be clear, the allegations based on archived

intelligence documents relate to Blanarik's past behavior and do not suggest any current, specific threat to classified information. But Blanarik and the NBU have also come under fire for granting a security clearance to the head of the prison system, Maria Kreslova, who like Blanarik is a nominee of HzDS, the party of the autocratic former Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar and the nefarious current Justice Minister Stefan Harabin. Kreslova is mentioned in archived Communist-era intelligence files as a willing informer and alcoholic. (Comment: The fact Harabin maintains a clearance, despite his proven past association with a suspected drug trafficker, also casts doubt on the integrity of the system. End comment.) From 2003-2005, Blanarik served as Central Secretary of HzDS. In late 2005, after HzDS began limited cooperation with the then-minority government of Mikulas Dzurinda, Blanarik was re-instated in the army with the rank of Major-General and appointed Defense AttachQ to Ukraine. It was in relation to that appointment that Blanarik received his currently-valid security clearance.

¶ 15. (C) Cumulatively, the allegations and Blanarik's association with HzDS give rise to concern that the GoS is not taking its responsibility with respect to protecting classified information seriously. We know the issue of security clearances and institutions aomng the Central and Eastern European NATO aspirants was a serious concern in the pre-accession period. As we raise this, we would welcome USNATO's thoughts on whether NATO can (or should) be asked to follow up with newer members to encourage full compliance with pre-accession commitments, and also whether this issue resonates more broadly in the Alliance. In the

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immediate case, however, it is clear that a fuller investigation of the facts is warranted not only by Slovakia's access to NATO classified information, but more fundamentally by due-diligence, justice and Slovak law.

¶ 16. (C) Guidance request: Post requests USNATO's comments and Department's concurrence with an approach to the Slovak Government on this issue. We recommend Department approve our use of the following talking points with GoS officials to express our concern and urge a full investigation and airing of the facts in this case:

- We are concerned by recent allegations concerning the Head of the National Security Office, Frantisek Blanarik, and his possible cooperation with Communist-era intelligence services.

- Slovakia is a NATO ally and cleared Slovak officials have access to some of our most sensitive classified information. It is of critical importance to us that Slovakia's systems for controlling access to that information be beyond reproach and fully consistent with Slovak law.

- We understand that, as a matter of Slovak law, a person who consciously cooperated with the Secret Police (STB) or an intelligence service of the Czechoslovak People's Army is ineligible to hold a top-level security clearance.

- We find the allegations that Blanarik consciously cooperated with Communist-era intelligence services to be credible enough to be taken seriously.

- Anything less than a full and impartial investigation of these allegations might lead to the impression that the law is being ignored or selectively applied. Especially in an area as sensitive as the protection of national and NATO secrets, the law must be followed scrupulously and it must be seen to be followed scrupulously.
End guidance request.

EDDINS